

4. [Amended once] The sensor according to claim 1, wherein the diaphragm has a skin-contact surface with a skin-contact dimension of between approximately 0.4 inch and 0.6 inch and wherein the sensor is used to acquire a signal from the radial artery.

5. [Amended once] [The sensor according to claim 1]

A body-sound sensor comprising:

a housing (110);

a skin-contact diaphragm (120) attached across a recess or opening in the housing,

a piezoelectric device (170) having a first portion mounted in a fixed relationship to the housing and a second portion displacementally coupled to the diaphragm; and

a solid-state amplifier (190) having a signal input coupled to the device, wherein the device and amplifier together have a frequency response at least including a range from below approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz, wherein the solid-state amplifier (190) includes a MOSFET input stage having an input resistance high enough to provide a frequency response that extends below approximately 0.1 hertz.

6. [Amended once] [The sensor according to claim 1]

A body-sound sensor comprising:

a housing (110);

a skin-contact diaphragm (120) attached across a recess or opening in the housing,

a piezoelectric device (170) having a first portion mounted in a fixed relationship to the housing and a second portion displacementally coupled to the diaphragm; and

a solid-state amplifier (190) having a signal input coupled to the device, wherein the device and amplifier together have a frequency response at least including a range from below approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz, wherein the solid-state amplifier (190) comprises:

an input/output signal wire;

a ground signal path;

a voltage divider, the voltage divider coupled between the input/output signal wire and the ground;

a drain resistor coupled to the ground;

a gate resistor coupled to the ground;

a MOSFET input transistor having a gate coupled to receive a signal from the piezoelectric device (170), a source coupled to an intermediate point of the voltage divider, and a drain, wherein the drain resistor is coupled between the drain and the ground, and the gate resistor is coupled between the gate and the ground; and

a bipolar output transistor having a collector coupled to the input/output signal wire, an emitter coupled to the ground, and a base coupled to the drain of the input transistor.

7. The sensor according to claim 6, wherein the piezoelectric device (170) includes a piezoelectric double-plate ceramic element, wherein two thin plates are bonded together so they amplify their piezoelectric actions.

8. [Amended once] [The sensor according to claim 1]

A body-sound sensor comprising:

a housing (110);

a skin-contact diaphragm (120) attached across a recess or opening in the housing,

a piezoelectric device (170) having a first portion mounted in a fixed relationship to the housing and a second portion displacementally coupled to the diaphragm; and

a solid-state amplifier (190) having a signal input coupled to the device, wherein the device and amplifier together have a frequency response at least including a range from below approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz, wherein the piezoelectric device (170) includes a piezoelectric double-plate ceramic element, wherein two thin plates are bonded together so they amplify their piezoelectric actions.

9. The sensor according to claim 1, further comprising a constant-current source coupled to the amplifier.

10. The sensor according to claim 6, further comprising a constant-current source coupled to input/output wire of the amplifier.

11. [Amended once] A piezoelectric acoustical pressure sensor including:

ay a stainless-steel housing, the housing having a skin-contact diaphragm, the diaphragm having a skin-contact surface with a skin-contact dimension of between approximately 0.3 inch and 0.7 inch;

a piezoelectric device displacementally coupled to the diaphragm;

a solid-state amplifier within the housing having a signal input coupled to the device, the device and amplifier together having a frequency response of approximately 0.1 hertz to at least approximately 250 hertz and wherein the sensor is used to acquire a signal from the radial artery.

12. [Amended once] [The sensor according to claim 11]

A piezoelectric acoustical pressure sensor including:

a stainless-steel housing, the housing having a skin-contact diaphragm, the diaphragm having a skin-contact surface with a skin-contact dimension of between approximately 0.3 inch and 0.7 inch;

a piezoelectric device displacementally coupled to the diaphragm;

a solid-state amplifier having a signal input coupled to the device, the device and amplifier together having a frequency response of approximately 0.1 hertz to at least approximately 250 hertz, wherein the solid-state amplifier (190) comprises:

an input/output signal wire;

a ground signal path;

a voltage divider, the voltage divider coupled between the input/output signal wire and the ground;

a drain resistor coupled to the ground;


a gate resistor coupled to the ground;

a MOSFET input transistor having a gate coupled to receive a signal from the piezoelectric device (170), a source coupled to an intermediate point of the voltage divider, and a drain, wherein the drain resistor is coupled between the drain and the ground, and the gate resistor is coupled between the gate and the ground; and

a bipolar output transistor having a collector coupled to the input/output signal wire, an emitter coupled to the ground, and a base coupled to the drain of the input transistor.

28 a

13. A method for sensing body sounds comprising the steps of:
- displacing a skin-contact diaphragm using changing pressure at a skin surface to create a diaphragm displacement;
 - converting the diaphragm displacement into a piezoelectric displacement;
 - generating an electrical signal representative of the piezoelectric displacement;
- and
- amplifying the electrical signal, wherein the steps of displacing, converting, and amplifying together have a frequency response at least including a range from below approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz.
14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the diaphragm is stainless steel.



15. [Amended once] The method according to claim 14, wherein the diaphragm has a skin-contact surface with a skin-contact dimension of between approximately 0.4 inch and 0.6 inch, and is approximately 0.006 inch thick and wherein the method is used to acquire a signal from the radial artery.

16. [Amended once] The method according to claim 13, wherein the diaphragm has a skin-contact surface with a skin-contact dimension of between approximately 0.4 inch and 0.6 inch and wherein the method is used to acquire a signal from the radial artery.

17. [Amended once] [The method according to claim 13]
- A method for sensing body sounds comprising the steps of:
 - displacing a skin-contact diaphragm using changing pressure at a skin surface to create a diaphragm displacement;
 - converting the diaphragm displacement into a piezoelectric displacement;
 - generating an electrical signal representative of the piezoelectric displacement;
- and
- amplifying the electrical signal, wherein the steps of displacing, converting, and amplifying together have a frequency response at least including a range from below

approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz, wherein the step of amplifying includes using a MOSFET input stage having an input resistance high enough to provide a frequency response that extends below approximately 0.1 hertz.

18. [Amended once] [The method according to claim 13]

A method for sensing body sounds comprising the steps of:

displacing a skin-contact diaphragm using changing pressure at a skin surface to create a diaphragm displacement;

converting the diaphragm displacement into a piezoelectric displacement;

generating an electrical signal representative of the piezoelectric displacement;

and

amplifying the electrical signal, wherein the steps of displacing, converting, and amplifying together have a frequency response at least including a range from below approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz, wherein the step of amplifying comprises the steps of:

providing a constant-current source and a ground signal path;

coupling a voltage divider between the constant-current source and the ground;

coupling the signal from the piezoelectric displacement to a gate of a MOSFET input transistor, the MOSFET transistor having a source coupled to an intermediate point of the voltage divider, and a drain, wherein a drain resistor is coupled between the drain and the ground, and a gate resistor is coupled between the gate and the ground; and

coupling a signal from the MOSFET transistor to a base of a bipolar output transistor having a collector coupled to the constant-current source, and an emitter coupled to the ground.

19. [Amended once] [The method according to claim 13]

A method for sensing body sounds comprising the steps of:

displacing a skin-contact diaphragm using changing pressure at a skin surface to create a diaphragm displacement;

converting the diaphragm displacement into a piezoelectric displacement;

generating an electrical signal representative of the piezoelectric displacement;

and

amplifying the electrical signal, wherein the steps of displacing, converting, and amplifying together have a frequency response at least including a range from below approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz, wherein the piezoelectric displacement is to a piezoelectric double-plate ceramic element, wherein two thin plates are bonded together so they amplify their piezoelectric actions.

20. [Amended once] [The method according to claim 15]

A method for sensing body sounds comprising the steps of:

displacing a skin-contact diaphragm using changing pressure at a skin surface to create a diaphragm displacement;

converting the diaphragm displacement into a piezoelectric displacement;

generating an electrical signal representative of the piezoelectric displacement;

and

amplifying the electrical signal, wherein the steps of displacing, converting, and amplifying together have a frequency response at least including a range from below approximately 1 hertz to above approximately 250 hertz wherein the diaphragm has a skin-contact surface with a skin-contact dimension of between approximately 0.4 inch and 0.6 inch, and is approximately 0.006 inch thick, wherein the piezoelectric displacement is to a piezoelectric double-plate ceramic element, wherein two thin plates are bonded together so they amplify their piezoelectric actions.